IN THE CLAIMS:

Please cancel claims 1-18 without prejudice or disclaimer, and substitute new Claims 19-36 therefor as follows:

Claims 1-18 (Cancelled).

19. (New) A microstructured optical fibre comprising a core region with a material having a refractive index n_{co} and a microstructured region surrounding the core region with a background material having a refractive index n_m which is lower than the refractive index n_{co}, the microstructured region comprising a plurality of microstructures having a refractive index different from the refractive index n_m, the distance Δ_Φ between the centers of any couple of adjacent microstructures being at least equal to about λ_p and not higher than about $1.5\lambda_p$, wherein λ_p is the spatial variation length of the electric field intensity in the microstructured region.

20. (New) The microstructured optical fibre according to claim 19, wherein the distance Δ_Φ is not higher than about $1.3\lambda_p$.

21. (New) The microstructured optical fibre according to claim 19, wherein a distance Δ_p between the center of an innermost microstructure and the edge of the core region is at least of about $0.50\lambda_p$.

22. (New) The microstructured optical fibre according to claim 19, wherein a distance Δ_p between the center of an innermost microstructure and the edge of the core region is not higher than about $0.75\lambda_p$.

23. (New) The microstructured optical fibre according to claim 19, wherein λ_p is not higher than 7 μm.

24. (New) The microstructured optical fibre according to claim 19, wherein λ_p is at least about 1 μm.

25. (New) The microstructured optical fibre according to claim 19, wherein the microstructures have a diameter of at least about 0.2 μm.

26. (New) The microstructured optical fibre according to claim 19, wherein the plurality of microstructures is arranged in at least one shell.

27. (New) The microstructured optical fibre according to claim 19, further comprising a cladding region surrounding the microstructured region.

28. (New) The microstructured optical fibre according to claim 27, wherein the cladding region comprises a material having a refractive index n_{c1} lower than the refractive index n_m of the background material of the microstructured region.

29. (New) The microstructured optical fibre according to claim 19, wherein the microstructures have a refractive index lower than the refractive index n_m of the background material of the microstructured region.

30. (New) An optical communication line comprising a microstructured optical fibre according to claim 19.

31. (New) An optical communication system comprising a transmitting station for supplying an optical signal, a receiving station for receiving the optical signal and an optical communication line according to claim 30.

32. (New) A method for making a microstructured optical fibre starting from a target fibre, comprising the steps of making a microstructured preform and drawing the microstructured preform into the microstructured optical fibre, wherein the step of making the microstructured preform comprises the steps of:

a) providing a core region having a material with a refractive index n_{co};

b) providing a microstructured region, surrounding the core region, having a background material with a refractive index n_m which is lower than the refractive index n_{co}; and

c) providing the microstructured region with a plurality of microstructures having a refractive index different from the refractive index n_m;

the step of making the preform further comprising the step of:

d) spacing the microstructures apart from each other so that in the drawn microstructured optical fibre the distance Δ_Φ between the centers of any couple of microstructures is at least equal to about λ_p and not higher than about $1.5\lambda_p$, wherein λ_p is the spatial variation length of the electric field intensity of the target fibre.

33. (New) The method according to claim 32, wherein the refractive index difference $\Delta n_{co,m}$ between the core region and the background material of the microstructured region is substantially the same as the refractive index difference between a core region and an outer core region of the target fibre.

34. (New) The method according to claim 32, wherein the step of making the preform also comprises the step of: e) providing a cladding region surrounding the microstructured region.

35. (New) The method according to claim 34, wherein the cladding region provided in step e) has a refractive index n_{c1} so that the refractive index difference $\Delta n_{m,c1}$ between the background material of the microstructured region and the cladding region is substantially the same as the refractive index difference between an outer core region and a cladding region, surrounding the outer core region, of the target fibre.

36. (New) A microstructured optical fibre preform comprising a core region with a material having a refractive index n_{co} and a microstructured region, surrounding the core region, with a background material having a refractive index n_m which is lower than the refractive index n_{co}, the microstructured region comprising a plurality of microstructures having a refractive index different from the refractive index n_m, the microstructures being spaced apart so that in a microstructured optical fibre drawn from the preform the distance Δ_Φ between the centers of any couple of microstructures is at least equal to about λ_p and not higher than about $1.5\lambda_p$, wherein λ_p is the spatial variation length of the electric field intensity in the microstructured region of the microstructured optical fibre drawn from the preform.